

Space News ROUNDUP!

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JSC Photo S97-04685 by Steve Candler

WELCOME HOME—STS-83 Pilot Susan Still receives an exuberant welcome home from her long time companion, Bozo. Bozo is 14 years old and Still has had the dog since he was six weeks old. Still and Commander Jim Halsell guided *Columbia* to a smooth landing at the Kennedy Space Center April 8, bringing the curtailed Microgravity Sciences Laboratory-1 mission to a safe conclusion. Plans to reflly STS-83 are under review.

JSC leaders take strategic look ahead

By Toni Loftin

Four NASA managers met with employees early this month and outlined their thinking about how JSC will pave the way for assembly of the International Space Station and develop programs for trips to the Moon and Mars.

The third in a series of JSC Strategic Management All Hands meetings, the April 9 discussion provided insight for JSC employees into program activities planned by Space Shuttle Program Manager Tommy Holloway, EVA Project Office Manager Don McMonagle, Space Operations Director John O'Neill and Acting Mission Operations Director Randy Stone. The managers also discussed the relevancy of their activities to the Human Exploration and Development of Space Strategic Plan.

In a discussion of space shuttle upgrades, improved orbiter capability, improved safety, cost reduction and how the Space Shuttle Program fits into the HEDS Strategic Plan, Holloway outlined several orbiter upgrade goals that include an increase in flight rates and a reduction of cost-per-pound to orbit.

"We are going to continue to improve the shuttle to make it all it can be," Holloway told the audience

in Teague Auditorium. "We will upgrade the system to increase our safety and overall capability and we are looking forward to your dedication and commitment to make that happen."

Holloway also discussed the unique challenges that the International Space Station will present to both the Space Shuttle and International Space Station Programs.

"The International Space Station will provide a unique challenge to all of us," he said. "The operations challenge of the space station is something that is bigger and more exciting and provides more opportunities for some really outstanding work than we have ever done in the history of the space program before."

McMonagle zeroed in on the EVA Project Office's Advanced EVA Research and Development Group, which didn't exist before the creation of the EVA Project Office.

"This group has the responsibility to look down the road to a return to the Moon, and perhaps future missions to Mars in a couple of decades," McMonagle said. "We are talking about what research and technology developments should go on today to be able to support those

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JSC's help desk changes to improve service

JSC's Information Systems Directorate and the Information Systems Contract are taking steps to provide faster, more effective service to information technology users at JSC despite a burgeoning need for such "help desk" service.

Help desk calls have grown consistently during the past three years from 68,000 calls in 1994 to 142,000 in 1996. The increase of calls began with the deployment of Windows 95 and Office 95 and continued to increase as more and more NASA employees and contractors began

using the Internet and local Intranets. Although the number of calls to the ISD Help Desk has continued to grow this year, the situation has begun to improve with reduced average wait times.

"Today's situation is a direct consequence of accepting the challenge of reducing budgets by 40 percent over the last two years while increasing the number of people supported," said ISD Director Dick Thorson. "Although our costs relative to industry are competitive, raising the level of user satisfaction is

our main focus."

Early analysis of calls indicated that the increase was transitory. The Information Systems Contract team of Northrup Grumman, Boeing and SAIC planned a multi-phased approach to meet the demand.

The first phase moved the Help Desk and consolidated it with other direct contact customer services. The new Information Technology Operations Center consolidates many functions that allow ISC to focus customer interactions through a centralized group and respond to

commonly reported problems. From this center, problems can be remotely diagnosed and the appropriate support people can be dispatched, including those already located in other buildings on site.

"We have a lot of people here who are very excited about what's happening, wanting to do the best job we can. Once we get everything ironed out people will really see a change for the better," said Laurie Branham, a Northrup Grumman employee who has been working on

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Plans under way for larger Inspection '97

A dedicated team of employees has begun working on plans to host 5,000 professionals at JSC's Inspection scheduled in November.

During Inspection 97, JSC will invite industry, business, community and education leaders to inspect—at the working level—the technologies and facilities that are used to accomplish its science, engineering, operations and management challenges.

"Inspection 97 will introduce our guests to the technologies and facilities in use and under development here at JSC," said Chairman Doug Blanchard. "The objective is to make our technologies, developed with federal tax dollars, available for solving problems in our region and around our nation. In addition, JSC will be looking for better approaches to our own challenges. Specifically, we want to identify areas where collaborative work could be mutually

advantageous."

Organizers said that Inspection 97 success will result from working together to create new and better solutions for JSC and the community.

Watch for a call next week to submit exhibit proposals. To keep up with all the latest activities look for the Inspection web page coming soon. The committee is seeking volunteers. Employees may contact their directorate committee representative.

This year's committee includes Blanchard, Debbie Denton-Misfeldt, Doug Peterson, David Westfall, Al Manson, Gloria Demers, Melissa Bodeau, Norm Chaffee, Michelle Munk, Bob Dotts, Ginger Gibson, Cathey Lamb, Stacey Nakamura, Jeff Evans, Lois Lenox, Peggy Wooten, Dale Fessenden, Roy Melton, Tom Rathjen, Mary Chesler, Diana Norman, Stephanie Castro, Tom Smith and Lupita Armendariz.



JSC Photo S97-04908 by Hector Gongora

CHECK OUT—JSC Director George Abbey, Deputy Director Brian Duffy and Assistant Director Technical Tom Akers visit with one of the 24 teams of undergraduate college students from around the country who are preparing to "float" aboard the KC-135 with experiments they designed. The NASA Reduced Gravity Student Flight Opportunities gave students from as far off as Idaho the chance to spend two weeks at JSC in briefings and training before conducting experiments during the 25 to 40 seconds of weightlessness on the aircraft. The program is seen as a way to encourage the next generation of scientists and engineers.